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# EVALUATION OF JUVENILE JUSTICE SECTOR REFORM IMPLEMENTATION IN ST. KITTS AND NEVIS ENDLINE COUNTRY REPORT

**AUGUST 2021**

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## **ENDLINE COUNTRY REPORT**

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### **DISCLAIMER**

The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

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# ACRONYMS

DPCPS	Department of Probation and Child Protection Services
DPP	Director of Public Prosecutions
CJA	Child Justice Act
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ESC	Eastern and Southern Caribbean
GUY	Guyana
HMP	Her Majesty's Prison
IT	Information Technology
OECS	Organization of the Eastern Caribbean States
SKN	Saint Kitts and Nevis
SKYE	Skills and Knowledge for Youth Empowerment
STL	Saint Lucia
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
YES	Youth Empowerment Services

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study assesses the progress of juvenile justice reform efforts in three countries: Guyana, St. Lucia and St. Kitts and Nevis. We focus on the following sets of questions: first, have key milestones in the juvenile justice reform process been achieved? If not, what have been the primary barriers to progress? Second, approximately how many youth are given diversion programs rather than traditional programs rooted in punitive measures, and how have these numbers evolved over time? Third, what is the quality and perceived effectiveness of court processes in the use of diversion and alternative sentencing options, as well as rehabilitation and reintegration programs? Where programming is weak, what have been the biggest obstacles to improvement? And finally, how likely is it that reforms will be institutionalized and sustainable over time?

To answer these questions, we adopt a qualitative longitudinal design in which we conducted key informant interviews with more than 90 stakeholders and youth across all three countries at three points in time: 2017 (baseline), 2019 (midline), and 2021 (endline). Our interviews focused on progress achieved to date across the following dimensions: coordination within and across juvenile justice agencies, access to diversion and alternative sentencing programs, probation services, detention facility conditions, and reintegration programs.

This report contains our main findings for St. Kitts and Nevis, along with a set of detailed recommendations, organized into two categories: recommendations that can be implemented immediately, and recommendations that will require time and additional resources to implement.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR ST. KITTS AND NEVIS

The government of St. Kitts and Nevis has made some progress towards reforming its juvenile justice system since our midline assessment in 2019. Most notably, the Child Justice Committee (CJC) was finally established in late 2019, a full six years after the passage of the Child Justice Act (CJA). Although the CJC is still a fledgling institution, it has achieved some progress in the past two years, most notably in the area of promoting diversion for non-violent offenses. Nevertheless, the CJC has yet to fulfill its potential in terms of both ensuring diversion for all those who qualify under the CJA of 2013, as well as in terms of ensuring coordination across agencies to promote the smooth and timely handling of juvenile cases. Coordination across agencies remains poor, resulting in prolonged periods of pre-trial detention for juveniles.

In the New Horizons Rehabilitation Center (NHRC), conditions have remained satisfactory, and the use of solitary confinement has reportedly been replaced with the more limited use of single separation. Another area of progress is that culturally, there seems to be a genuine commitment to the principles of restorative justice for juveniles, and a keen interest in reforming the juvenile justice system to these ends.

Pre-trial diversion and effective reintegration of recently released juveniles continue to be plagued by a lack of dedicated and accredited programs, despite years of rhetoric paid to the importance of these types of programs. Moreover, probation officers – who have primary responsibility for ensuring adherence to diversion plans and for ensuring successful reintegration – remain poorly motivated and poorly monitored, limiting the quality of supervision and counseling received by juveniles under their supervision.

The main endline report containing findings for all three countries is available on USAID's Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) [here](#).

The endline policy briefs associated with this evaluation are also available on the DEC:

- [Guyana](#)
- [St. Lucia](#)
- [St. Kitts and Nevis](#)

# INTRODUCTION

Juvenile justice systems in Eastern and Southern Caribbean (ESC) states have historically had a punitive orientation, emphasizing incarceration and retribution rather than rehabilitation and reintegration. Yet, a large and growing body of research suggests that that punitive sentencing practices tend to increase, rather than decrease, recidivism (Wong et al., 2016). Conversely, sentencing practices grounded in restorative justice and rehabilitation have consistently been shown to reduce recidivism (Wilson and Hoge, 2013).

Recognizing the potential of restorative justice practices, many governments in Eastern and Southern Caribbean states have begun to reform their juvenile justice systems. For over a decade, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has actively supported these reforms, whether through violence prevention programs for at-risk youth, providing legislative frameworks for reform laws, or implementing programs to modernize systems of youth justice. The hope is that a more rehabilitative and less punitive approach to juvenile justice can break the cycle of incarceration, recidivism, and further incarceration, and thereby help address high rates of crime and violence in the region.

To evaluate the success of these reforms and help inform its programming, USAID contracted Social Impact to implement a longitudinal, qualitative study of juvenile justice outcomes in Guyana, St. Lucia, and St. Kitts and Nevis. The study began in 2017 with a comprehensive baseline assessment of the state of juvenile justice reforms based on more than 180 key informant interviews with stakeholders and youth across all three countries. In 2019, the research team returned to conduct another round of key informant interviews to assess progress made since 2017. This assessment reports the results of the endline assessment, which includes more than 95 interviews conducted remotely and in-person between April and June 2021.

Our analysis focused on three overarching sets of questions. First, have key milestones in the juvenile justice reform process been achieved? If not, what have been the primary barriers to progress? Second, approximately how many youth are given diversion programs rather than traditional programs rooted in punitive measures, and how have these numbers evolved over time? Third, what is the quality and perceived effectiveness of court processes in the use of diversion and alternative sentencing options and rehabilitation and reintegration programs? Where programming is weak, what have been the biggest obstacles to improvement? And finally, how likely is it that reforms will be institutionalized and sustainable over time?

The remainder of this report is organized as follows. First, we provide background on juvenile justice reforms in the region, review recent literature on the effectiveness of restorative justice reforms, and discuss USAID's efforts to promote these reforms in the region. We then present the study methodology and key research questions. Next, we provide a detailed account of progress achieved in St. Kitts in Nevis to date across the following dimensions: coordination within and across juvenile justice agencies, access to diversion and alternative sentencing programs, probation services, detention facility conditions, and reintegration programs. We conclude with a set of detailed recommendations based on our findings.

## BACKGROUND ON REFORMS IN THE REGION

High rates of crime and violence remain a challenge for St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and Guyana. Table I details the reported homicide, robbery, and residential burglary rates per 100,000 people in each of the countries in 2018. Although there has been a decrease in violent crime over the last decade, crime rates in all three countries remain well above global averages. For example, St. Kitts and Nevis has a homicide rate of 41.8, which is nearly seven times higher than the global average of 5.8 homicides per 100,000 people. In addition to the social and psychosocial toll on affected communities, such high rates of insecurity have serious consequences for economic development.

**Table I: Selected crime rates in St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and Guyana, 2018**

	HOMICIDE RATE	ROBBERY RATE	BURGLARY RATE
St. Kitts and Nevis	42	126	580
St. Lucia	21	164	503
Guyana	14	140	278
USA	5	86	340
Notes: Homicide, robbery, and burglary rates per 100,000 people. Sources: OSAC, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, U.S. Department of State; FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program (USA).			

Juvenile delinquency is widely viewed as a core contributor to crime in the region. Although limited empirical data exist concerning crime and delinquency in each of the three countries, scholars generally suggest that violent crime in the Caribbean is caused by a toxic mix of guns, gangs, drugs, poverty, and a lack of economic opportunities. In our midline study in 2019, we asked stakeholders what the main drivers of juvenile delinquency were in their respective countries. Although stakeholders in each of the countries identified common themes such as the role of parents, the education system, and peers, important nuances emerged. Substance abuse was identified as a driver of delinquency in St. Kitts and Nevis and Guyana, but not in St. Lucia. Neighborhood-level influences including gang activity were considered by stakeholders to be an important driver of delinquency in all three countries (Noltrieke, 2020; Hill & Morris, 2017). Other contributing factors include a police force that is corrupt, abusive, often absent from communities, and unable to effectively prevent or investigate crimes or build civilians' trust (Sutton & Baxter, 2017). Corrupt and ineffective policing, in turn, contributes to low levels of trust, potentially deterring cooperation and further exacerbating police ineffectiveness (Tyler, 2006).

As a result of these dynamics, juvenile justice systems in the region have become overwhelmed by youth who need help transitioning away from delinquent activities and need support to reintegrate into mainstream, law-abiding society. Historically, these systems have adopted retributive and punitive sentencing practices rather than focusing on rehabilitation and restorative justice practices. This has slowly started to change as the negative effects of punitive policies on recidivism outcomes have become better understood and more widely documented (Wong et al., 2016). Research from the United States (U.S.) and other contexts has shown that punitive sentencing practices tend to increase, rather than decrease,



recidivism (Wong et al., 2016). Conversely, sentencing practices grounded in restorative justice and rehabilitation have consistently been shown to reduce recidivism (Wilson and Hoge, 2013).<sup>1</sup>

At the forefront of juvenile justice reforms around the world is the use of pre-trial diversion and alternative sentencing. (To ensure conceptual clarity, we follow the majority of scholarship and use the term diversion to refer to pre-trial diversion, and we use the term “alternative sentencing” to refer to post-trial diversion). Pre-trial diversion programs vary considerably depending on many factors, including the objectives of the program (e.g., saving judicial resources vs. reducing recidivism); who determines eligibility and provides oversight or services (e.g., police, probation, court staff); which youth are eligible (e.g., status offenders, youth accused of minor crimes); the scope of any programming or oversight provided as part of diversion; what is required of youth in diversion and what happens if they fail to comply; and what are the incentives for youth to participate. As such, pre-trial diversion and post-trial diversion (i.e. alternative sentencing) can vary from “informal diversion”, whereby the police or courts provide a warning and release the youth without any conditions, services, or oversight, to more formalized diversion, whereby youth are enrolled in an accredited diversion program, sign an agreement laying out the conditions of the program, receive extensive services, are closely overseen, and receive certain benefits following successful completion of the program. Examples of these pre- and post-trial diversion programs include drug counseling, vocational training, community service, probation, and restitution to victims.

## ADDRESSING THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF JUVENILES

A central feature of juvenile justice reform is the recognition that juveniles are different from adult offenders. Juveniles often lack maturity, engage in risk-taking and impulsive behavior, and are less likely to initially consider the consequences of potential actions compared to adults. Current thinking in neuroscience suggests that the parts of the brain that govern impulse control, planning, and thinking ahead continue to develop after the age of 18 (Steinberg, 2007). Scholars have identified that the limbic region of the brain, where emotions and reward behaviors are processed, develops before the prefrontal region, where logical thinking and behavioral control lie (Casey et al., 2011). Children, when faced with emotionally charged situations may make decisions based upon impulse rather than careful cognitive consideration. Given the later development of the prefrontal cortex, it is unsurprising that children are relatively more susceptible to peer influence and peer pressure than adults. The influence of peers on adolescent offending is well established in the literature. Peers may transmit attitudes supportive of delinquency, sustain a historical narrative of previous delinquent acts, and provide an encouraging forum for the “acting out” of new delinquent behaviors.

## ORIGINS OF JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM IN THE REGION

The model law on juvenile justice,<sup>2</sup> developed by the United Nations, has been the bedrock for advancing juvenile justice reforms in St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and Guyana. The model law provides a framework for developing a juvenile justice system that supports four important principles espoused in the 1990 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC): nondiscrimination irrespective of race,

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<sup>1</sup> Wilson and Hoge (2013) conducted a study of 73 pretrial diversion and alternative sentencing programs consisting of 14,573 youth offenders and compared them to 18,840 juveniles processed in the traditional justice system to assess the rate of recidivism in each group. The authors found that “in 60 of the 73 diversion programs, the recidivism rate of diverted youth was lower than that of youth processed by traditional justice system” (p. 504).

<sup>2</sup> UNODC 2013 Justice in Matters Involving Children in Conflict with the Law: Model Law on Juvenile Justice and Related Commentary [https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/Justice\\_Matters\\_Involving-Web\\_version.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/Justice_Matters_Involving-Web_version.pdf)

sex, language, religion, ethnicity, disability, or nationality (Article 2); the primary consideration should be the best interests of the child (Article 3); the child's right to survival and development (Article 6); and the right of the child to participate in decisions affecting him or her, and in particular, to be given the opportunity to be heard in any judicial or administrative proceedings affecting him or her (Article 12). Of the three countries, St. Kitts and Nevis was first to ratify the UNCRC in 1990, followed by Guyana in 1991, and St. Lucia in 1993.

The model law enshrines the principle that children in conflict with the law should receive due process, provides provisions for the age of criminal responsibility, and recommends the abolishment of status offenses.<sup>3</sup> The model law provides guidance on all stages of the juvenile justice process, including apprehension, arrest, detainment in police custody or a juvenile detention center, the establishment of children's courts overseen by judges trained in juvenile matters, provisions for trial, custodial sentences and alternative sentencing, conditions of detention and institutional treatment, as well as the need to provide aftercare services.

The model law dictates that, where possible, children should be diverted from the formal juvenile justice system. Such diversion could occur at the point of apprehension by the police, following arrest and charge, or through a formal court diversion program after the young person has appeared in court. Diversionary programming, informed by a thorough assessment of the child's needs, may adopt a restorative justice lens, whereby efforts are made to repair potential harms for the young person, the victim, and the community. In a diversionary program, the child is typically referred to a Child Welfare Board. The Board is then responsible for overseeing any expectations regarding community service, educational and therapeutic interventions, curfews, and supervision requirements.

Although many children in conflict with the law are suitable for diversionary programming, some young people have committed acts of delinquency that are so serious that they need to be managed within the formal juvenile justice system. Alternative sentencing to probation allows the child to be supervised by a probation officer. After a thorough assessment of the young person's risks and needs, an appropriate supervision plan is designed. A strong supervision plan seeks to address those needs that, if unaddressed, are most likely to lead to further delinquency. The young person is expected to report to the probation officer on a regular basis, abide by curfews, and complete rehabilitative and educational programming.

Under the model law, the deprivation of liberty through a custodial sentence should be a last resort, and for the shortest possible period of time relative to the seriousness of the delinquent act committed. The purpose of the custodial sentence in the juvenile justice system is to be reintegrative, with the aim to assist the child in playing a constructive role in society, rather than being a punitive or retributive sentence. Given the reintegrative purpose of custodial sentences for children, the provision of rehabilitative and educational services for incarcerated youth is fundamental. The model law requires a shift in institutional culture, whereby practices such as the housing of children with adult incarcerated

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<sup>3</sup> Status offenses are those offenses that would not be deemed criminal if the individual committing the offense was over the age of responsibility. Typical status offenses include truancy, running away from home, and specific to some Caribbean countries, the crime of wandering. A number of behaviors could previously be construed as "wandering," including when a child is away from home all night and the parent or guardian does not know the child's whereabouts, when a child hangs out with older people who may be using drugs or are engaged in other criminal activities, or when children are engaged in activities related to human trafficking.

people, the corporal punishment of children, and the use of solitary confinement are not allowed. Of note is that solitary confinement and physical abuse of children are forbidden under the UNCRC.

Re-entry and reintegration planning is a critical component of juvenile justice system reform. Planning for release should begin on day one of the young person's period of detention. Best practices call for the probation officer to be visiting the young person in the facility and developing a good understanding of the home environment where the child will be returning to. Educational qualifications, employment-focused training, housing, social supports, substance abuse treatment, and mental health services are all critical factors that should be considered when preparing a young person for successful community reintegration after detention.

## **PROGRESS IDENTIFIED AT MIDLINE**

Juvenile justice reform is an ongoing process that requires sustained attention and commitment by key champions within each country. In our midline study in 2019, we were able to identify important progress that had been achieved. All three countries included in the study had passed legislation fashioned from the model law. St. Kitts and Nevis was the first country, passing the Child Justice Act in 2013. Guyana passed the Juvenile Justice Act in April 2018, followed by St. Lucia's adoption of the Child Justice Act and the Child Care, Protection, and Adoption Act in November 2018. In St. Kitts and Nevis, the members of the Child Justice Committee overseeing diversionary programming had been identified by the Probation and Child Welfare Board. Strong relationships existed between probation officers and schools, creating a strong foundation for community interventions and engagement.

## **CHALLENGES REMAINING AT MIDLINE**

Despite progress made at midline, significant challenges remained in relation to the full implementation of juvenile justice reforms. In St. Kitts and Nevis and St. Lucia, there was a need to formalize court-led diversionary programming. Also, the Child Justice Committee had yet to become operational, limiting the use and extent of diversionary programs. There was also a need to implement empirical risk assessments in probation in St. Kitts and Nevis.

In all three countries, there was a need to formalize alternative sentencing options, including the use of supervision and rehabilitative programming as alternatives to incarceration. There was also a need to expand educational, rehabilitative programming, and mental health services for detained young people. In St. Kitts and Nevis, we highlighted concerns that children were detained in Her Majesty's Prison (HMP), an adult prison facility. In all three countries, concerns were raised concerning the use of solitary confinement and corporal punishment with detained youth, in direct contravention of the UNCRC. Finally, there was a need for re-entry and reintegration support services for young people held in detention facilities.

## USAID JUVENILE JUSTICE PROGRAMMING IN THE REGION

Reducing youth involvement in crime and violence is a priority for countries in the ESC as well as for USAID. In 2016, USAID launched its five-year Youth Empowerment Services (YES) initiative, which seeks to reduce juvenile crime and violence in the Eastern Caribbean by applying a public health framework to crime reduction and violence prevention. The public health model of crime prevention is a proactive approach to juvenile justice, which focuses on reducing risk and increasing resiliency for at-risk youth and justice-involved youth (Welsh, 2005). The framework offers an alternative to reliance on the courts and incarceration by focusing on rehabilitation and implementing a practical, science-based approach to improve the management of juveniles in conflict with the law (Hamburg, 1998).

The YES initiative builds off previous USAID programs and partnerships developed in the region that were designed to address the concerns of youth crime and violence. In 2016, USAID and the Organization of the Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) launched the Juvenile Justice Reform Project Part II (JJRP), building on JJRP I, which ran from 2011 to 2015. The project's aim was to facilitate the reformation of the juvenile justice systems in six countries, including St. Lucia and St. Kitts and Nevis (but not Guyana). The goal was to strengthen the juvenile justice process through the application of national and sub-regional measures to improve the life circumstances of youth in conflict with the law, with a strong focus on rehabilitation and reintegration.<sup>4</sup> More specifically, the initiative aimed to:

- (1) Improve the legal and regulatory frameworks by drafting model legislation and promoting a national juvenile justice strategy.
- (2) Build capacity for effective justice administration through trainings, development of operating procedures, and introduction of case management software and screening tools.
- (3) Modernize diversion, detention, and rehabilitative processes through investments in detention facilities and promotion of alternative sentencing options.
- (4) Improve linkages with civil society through public awareness and education activities.

More recently, USAID supported the Community, Family, and Youth Resilience (CFYR) program in St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and Guyana, which aims to create pathways away from crime for youth aged 10 to 29. Using a risk screen to identify at-risk youth, the program provides at-risk youth with services identified through a community-based approach in which the youth, their family, and local stakeholders collaboratively define problems, identify risk and protective factors, and create local solutions. The program ended in 2020, and a rigorous evaluation found it to be effective at some, but not all of its objectives (Diaz-Cayeros et al., 2020).

## EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

This implementation study seeks to understand if juvenile justice sector reforms in the three countries have been successfully implemented. This is no small undertaking, as there are enormous challenges in transitioning a juvenile justice system away from a detention-based, punitive approach to a diversionary and rehabilitation-based approach. This transition requires legislative changes, political will, resources, and a cultural shift in the justice sector. Recognizing these challenges, this evaluation tracks the status and quality of reform efforts in each of the three countries over a five-year time span, from 2017 (baseline) to

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<sup>4</sup> USAID. St. Lucian Youth Benefit from Juvenile Justice Reform. (March 30, 2016). <https://www.usaid.gov/eastern-and-southern-caribbean/news-information/press-releases/st-lucian-youth-benefit-juvenile>

2019 (midline) to 2021 (endline).

Our evaluation is guided by four overarching sets of research questions:

1. Have key milestones in the juvenile justice reform process been achieved? If not, what have been the primary barriers to progress?
2. How many youth are currently being enrolled in diversion programs rather than in traditional programs rooted in punishment and incarceration? Has there been progress over time? Why or why not?
3. What is the quality and perceived effectiveness of court processes, diversion programs, and rehabilitation and reintegration programs? Where programming is weak, what have been the biggest obstacles to improvement?
4. How likely is it that reform efforts will be institutionalized and sustainable over time?

In addressing these questions, we aim to inform USAID’s programming in the region. We also hope that this evaluation will be a useful resource for stakeholders and staff in the juvenile justice systems of St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Guyana, and for those interested in the implementation of system-wide juvenile and criminal justice reform efforts.

## EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODS

This implementation study uses a comparative, longitudinal qualitative research design. We examine three countries, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Guyana, at three different points in time: baseline (2017), midline (2019), and endline (2021). This endline country report for St. Kitts and Nevis builds on the midline findings, which presented the mid-point status of juvenile justice reform in the country.

At baseline and midline, the majority of interviews with stakeholders and youth occurred in-person and in-country. At endline, however, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented international travel and most in-person interviews. As a result, the majority of stakeholder interviews took place virtually. In St. Kitts and Nevis, the team was unable to access detained youth owing to a spike in COVID-19 cases. The research team attempted to interview youth virtually, but the facilities were unable to provide the necessary accommodations. In the Limitations section, we discuss the advantages and disadvantages of relying on virtual platforms for most interviews as well as the implications of not being able to access youth in detention in St. Kitts and Nevis.

Data collection began in late April 2021 and lasted through June 2021.

In St. Kitts and Nevis, the research team spoke with:

- 15 government officials, probation officers, detention facility staff, judges, and court officials
- 0 youth in detention
- 5 youth on probation

The research team in St. Kitts and Nevis did not conduct any in-person interviews or site visits due to the incidence of community spread of COVID-19.

The research team interviewed both high and low-level officials across the juvenile justice sector. The team covered multiple regions in each of the three countries. The interview protocol covered a range of topics, including legal compliance with the juvenile justice legislation, inter- and intra-agency cooperation, diversion and alternative sentencing practices, detention facility conditions, and reintegration services. Although the research team followed a protocol, the semi-structured nature of the interview allowed interviewers to follow alternative lines of inquiry and prompts when necessary.

Prior to interviews, researchers obtained verbal informed consent and assured participants that personally identifiable information would be kept confidential. To protect participants' confidentiality, job titles and places of employment are omitted when presenting direct quotes in this study.

In addition to the qualitative interviews conducted for this study, the research team reviewed relevant legislation, policy documents, and the grey literature on juvenile justice reforms in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean.

## LIMITATIONS

Our study comes with several important limitations. First, because we rely primarily on open-ended interview questions rather than close-ended questions, it is difficult to make precise, quantified comparisons across time. This design decision was deliberate, to enable the research team to capture the complexities and nuances of implementing comprehensive juvenile justice reform, but it does come at a cost. In lieu of a quantified assessment of progress on a narrow set of close-ended metrics, we offer a holistic assessment that captures the unique challenges that have emerged within each country over time.

A second limitation that applies to the endline study is that most interviews were conducted virtually rather than in-person due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Survey methodology generally places a premium on in-person interviewing, because it enables the interviewer to establish a rapport with the respondent that facilitates information sharing and truthfulness. However, despite our initial concerns and prior expectations, we found that the virtual interview format performed well in terms of building rapport and allowing for honest and substantive conversations about progress (or lack thereof) towards juvenile justice reform. Contrary to what would be expected if rapport were weak, we found that respondents were forthright and offered many critical perspectives on progress within their own agency and in adjacent agencies. The virtual interview format also provided some notable advantages over in-person interviewing. For example, the virtual format allowed the team to spread out interviews over a longer period of time (rather than trying to squeeze interviews into a two-week country visit). This gave the team more time to prepare for interviews and to update the protocol in light of emerging themes and findings.

A third limitation to this study is that we were not able to access youth in detention in St. Kitts and Nevis due to COVID-19 related restrictions. As a result, we are unable to affirmatively verify the statements of detention facility officials about conditions within their facilities. We were, however, able to cross-reference their statements with those of more neutral actors, such as lawyers of defendants, court officials, and members of the child justice committees. Overall, we feel confident about the accuracy of our findings on detention facilities in St. Kitts and Nevis, though they should be interpreted with some caution and ideally be verified once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

A fourth limitation to this study was the sampling methodology for youth on probation interviews. Because there was no available sampling frame of youth being supervised on probation in any of the

countries, our team had to rely on a convenience sampling approach where probation officers provided names of youth willing to participate in these conversations. While we indicated to officers our goal to speak with a range of youth, supervised by different officers and with varied experiences within the juvenile justice system, ultimately, we had little control over the names we were provided. However, the youth we spoke to still provided critical perspectives on their experiences within the system.

Our study has also been descoped since the outset of this study in 2016. Our original study design involved complementing the qualitative data in this report with large-N quantitative data on justice-involved juveniles. However, administrative records on juveniles in conflict with the law proved difficult to access due to incomplete databases, country-specific legal requirements, and some level of hesitation on behalf of country officials.



## **DETAILED FINDINGS**

### **BACKGROUND ON JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM IN ST. KITTS AND NEVIS**

St. Kitts and Nevis passed the Child Justice Act (CJA) in 2013 and was the only of the three countries to have passed reformed legislation at the time of the baseline study.

Among the most important provisions of the CJA was the establishment of the Child Justice Committee (CJC). Comprised of a magistrate and two social workers, the CJC's mandate is to review all cases involving juveniles, to assign youth to participate in diversion programs for those who qualify, and in the most general sense, to advocate on behalf of juveniles in conflict with the law to ensure that rehabilitation and reintegration are at the core of their case plan.

Despite passing the CJA in 2013, St. Kitts and Nevis did not begin to operationalize the Child Justice Committee until 2019, causing a delay in the development of diversion programs and the establishment of appropriate procedures to comply with other elements of the CJA. These consequences are detailed in the ensuing subsections.

In addition to establishing the CJC, the CJA increased the age of criminal responsibility to 12 (from an earlier age of 8). The Act also outlines how youth offenders are to be assessed, managed, and provided with opportunities for rehabilitation and reintegration into society. The Act stipulates that a juvenile's parents and a probation officer are to be notified within 24 hours of an arrest, and that a probation officer conducts an initial assessment of the juvenile's well-being and home environment within 48 hours. The Act also stipulates that the child is to appear before the CJC for an initial inquiry, prior to any court appearance. Attended by the child's parents, probation officer, attorney (if applicable), the arresting officer, and a representative of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the initial inquiry is an opportunity for all concerned stakeholders to identify diversion options for the child that will emphasize the child's best interests and rehabilitation.

Although the Act was passed in 2013, many of its tenets still need to be fully instituted, as we proceed to detail in the remainder of this section.

### **INTERAGENCY COORDINATION**

As was the case at baseline and midline, significant coordination challenges plague the administration of juvenile justice in St. Kitts and Nevis. These challenges lie at nearly every step in the juvenile justice chain, starting with the procedures the police are expected to follow when they apprehend a juvenile. Stakeholders were unanimous in reporting that the police need further training in the CJA as well as basic procedural matters, such as how to fill out required forms, where juveniles can be detained, and who to contact after apprehending a juvenile. Although there has been training for a select number of officers on these matters, most notably through the JJRP program, it appears that such training only reaches a small fraction of officers. Moreover, respondents indicated that many of those who had been trained had since been transferred to new divisions, and that new recruits are not provided juvenile justice training as part of their basic training.



Our interviews suggest the police’s lack of familiarity with the CJA and the appropriate procedures for juveniles has several negative consequences. First, when the Initial Inquiry and other appropriate procedures are not followed, it provides juveniles’ attorneys with grounds on which the case may be dismissed. The result is that juveniles are able to circumvent the law, while at the same time missing opportunities for assistance and intervention that would help steer them away from crime and towards more productive activities. In the words of one stakeholder we spoke with:

*“[The police’s failure to follow procedures] is a situation that has to be corrected because there’s some juveniles who really need the intervention and are not getting it. But because of this system not really working as it should.”*

A second consequence of the police’s lack of training in juvenile justice matters is that their uncertainty concerning appropriate paperwork and procedures gives some officers the false impression that juveniles are hard to deal with. According to one stakeholder we spoke with, this perception of additional work deters many officers from handling juvenile cases, which only further contributes to the system’s failure to reach juveniles in need of intervention and rehabilitation. Indeed, this individual went so far as to question whether the decline in juvenile cases observed over the past several years is real, or is the result of police increasingly shying away from juvenile cases. The solution, in our view, is to ensure that all officers are fully versed in the CJA, and that the appropriate forms and procedures are put in place to smoothly process juvenile cases, from the point of initial apprehension.

A third consequence deriving from the improper handling of juvenile cases is that it contributes to delays in the administration of justice. Our research found that many youth spend upwards of two years in detention awaiting trial, and a significant contributor to this is the lackluster investigation and preparation of files by the police. The Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), as well, was cited by several stakeholders for its failure to proactively coordinate with the police during case investigations. Summarizing the situation, one individual stated:

*“The challenge, to be honest, is that with any court you need the case files about a week ahead of the hearing. And what gets us upset is that the officers are coming in for the hearing with the juvenile and their report at the same time, not giving us any time to review the assessment. The officers just hand in the report as they come in. And they are not using the proper form. They’re just talking off the top of their head.”*

To be sure, shortfalls on behalf of the police were not the only contributor to insufficient coordination in the juvenile justice space. Many informants said that a major unmet need was for a commonly understood set of protocols and procedures mapping out who does what and when across agencies, to ensure the smooth and timely handling of cases. As the coordinating body with a mandate to ensure proper juvenile case management, it would be appropriate for the CJC to step in to fill this role, but it has thus far failed to do so.

Stakeholders identified several other important challenges facing the CJC. Most notably, the CJC meets very infrequently, and has only handled twelve cases since its inception in 2019, only a small fraction of those who come in conflict with the law and would benefit from their services. As one stakeholder reported: “the CJC meets only once every couple of months, whereas we get cases weekly.” This is a

clear violation of the Child Justice Act, which states that “The Child Justice Committee shall meet at least twice monthly.”<sup>5</sup> Another cited their lack of urgency in handling matters in the time between meetings:

*“Availability is important. But the CJC doesn’t deal with cases urgently. There is much too much delay ... if I get the case today, can they respond tomorrow with their input? So that it doesn’t wait another week?”*

Representatives of the CJC agree on the need for improved coordination and the development of a set of clear procedures, but they also cite the need for intervention by the Ministry of Community Development, Gender Affairs and Social Services:

*“There is an urgent need for a clear policy in relation to the arrest and taking the child before the CJC, and the dealings with the CJC before the court. Currently, responsibility is blurred because there’s no clear policy about this. The act says that the Minister can make regulation on this. But we have never really had regulation made, for the operation of the CJC. We need clear policy about when and how a case comes before the CJC and when it instead goes directly to the court.”*

When stakeholders were questioned about the long delays in processing juvenile cases, it was noted that the Juvenile Magistrate only convenes to hear juvenile cases one day per month. It was suggested that increasing that number to two days per month would help speed things along.

Coordination failures also plague the relationship between the courts and the New Horizons Rehabilitation Center (NHRC). According to one respondent, “the protocols established between New Horizons, the probation office, and the courts still need to be developed.” This individual noted that the NHRC was routinely “not given enough lead time, or information about a child coming to the facility. This makes it difficult to plan and prepare for a child.”

Sadly, the consequences of pervasive coordination failures fall on those most vulnerable in the system – juveniles in conflict with the law. As one stakeholder described:

*“Nobody independent is keeping anyone accountable to the guidelines laid out in the CJC. It’s always going to be ‘if it doesn’t happen and no one follows through, no one is held accountable for that.’ There is no separate oversight body. The only consequence is for the juvenile in question, whose case is delayed yet again, or whose needs for diversion and rehabilitation go unmet.”*

## **DIVERSION, ALTERNATIVE SENTENCING, AND PROBATION**

The juvenile justice system has made some progress since midline towards institutionalizing the practices of diversion and alternative sentencing. The most notable point of progress is the formulation of the CJC, which is now operational. Since its inception in late 2019, the CJC has handled twelve cases, all of which were for non-violent offenses. It is not known how this number compares to the total number of cases that were eligible to go before the CJC. When asked about this point, neither the CJC, the Probation and Child Protection Services Department, nor the police’s Special Victims Unit (SVU) could provide reliable estimates due to a lack of organized administrative databases. But based on the testimony of all the

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<sup>5</sup> Child Justice Act of 2013, Part III, 7(1).

stakeholders we spoke with, it is clear that a more active CJC would be able to handle a much larger number of cases.

To date, the CJC and the courts have focused primarily on diversion, rather than alternative sentencing. In the modal CJC case, the CJC works with the child's probation officer to develop a diversion plan consisting of some combination of restitution, community service, curfew, and school attendance and/or employment. Should the juvenile fail to meet the terms of his/her diversion plan, then s/he will be summoned back to the Juvenile Magistrate's court for traditional sentencing, which may include time at the NHRC.

All the diversion options used to date have been informal or were identified on an ad hoc basis; at present, the juvenile justice system still lacks dedicated diversion programs that are accredited by the government. "It forces us to be creative," reported one stakeholder on the lack of formal diversion programs. "We have been asking for dedicated programs for a while now. If a child is stealing, there should be some specific program geared toward that. If it's a weapons charge, there should be a program for that. And ditto for the drugs." However, despite the appeals of the CJC, thus far the Department of Probation and Child Protection Services has not identified or certified any dedicated diversion program.

A stakeholder we spoke to confirmed the lack of diversion options for juveniles: "what we lack are programs that address the 'root causes' of the problem, like poverty, poor housing, and lack of family support." When asked why these programs were not more readily available, the representative reported that "it's basically a lack of resources." This individual also noted that the absence of dedicated diversion programs is in contrast with the number of pre-arrest programs that are available, such as the Young Explorer's program and the CFYR Family Matter's program, as well as with the availability of vocational programs for youth in-general, such as the Advanced Vocational Educational Centre (AVEC) and the Skills Training Empowerment Program (STEP).

As was the case at midline, stakeholders reported that another common form of diversion was *pre-arrest* diversion, which occurs within the day-to-day context of police discretionary decision-making. For young people involved in low-level offenses such as petty theft, disorderly conduct, fighting, and marijuana possession, the police may convene a "roundtable" with their parents and probation officers to develop an alternative plan to the formal justice system. In lieu of formal juvenile justice processing, a young person may be asked to complete community service hours, attend school-based programming, attend a group run by probation officers, or be monitored through home visits.

In the absence of dedicated diversion or rehabilitation programs, probation officers have served as the primary providers of these services. This was the case at baseline and midline, and it continues to be the case today. Through mentoring, counseling, and job-placement assistance, probation officers play a critical role in this space. "We are the teeth of the juvenile justice system. We make sure everyone is on the same page; we do counseling, mentoring, and we provide wrap-around services," described one probation official.

Probation officers are also critical to ensuring the directives of the CJC are duly carried out. As one official described, "success [of diversion] really depends on the probation officer, and how aggressively they monitor adherence to the orders of the CJC."

Yet, despite their critical role in the juvenile justice system, our interviews reveal significant shortfalls within the Department of Probation and Child Protection Services (DPCPS). To be sure, the COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected operations within the DPCPS, namely by preventing probation officers from engaging directly with the juveniles they supervise. Instead, probation officers have been forced to supervise their cases remotely, through phone calls with the juveniles and their families. But even beyond the adverse effects of COVID-19, court officials, representatives of the CJC, lawyers, and police officers were unanimous in highlighting a lack of robust oversight as a major barrier to diversion and rehabilitation. As one stakeholder described:

*“We are not so pleased with the probation officers, with their level of monitoring and counseling of the juveniles under their supervision. . . . the juveniles are not given the attention that they are supposed to be given. The CJC makes a contract, and it’s not being adhered to. So, the main challenge with diversion right now is with the probation officers and the quality of their monitoring.”*

Stakeholders also cited a lack of robust action to help find juveniles jobs, ensure they are enrolled in school, or identify vocational programs that match their interests. One juvenile we spoke with said that they were unable to attend a program they were interested in at the Advanced Vocational Education Centre (AVEC) for lack of bus fare – the type of modest obstacle that a proactive probation officer can be expected to solve. Another young person said that their probation officer only called once a month rather than making in-person visits, and that he often wasn’t home for the calls. A third individual had “aged out” of their probation when they turned 18, but received no concluding care plan or send-off from his probation officer.

When asked what reforms would be necessary to improve the performance of probation officers, most stakeholders cited greater resources, better training of probation officers, and greater oversight by administrators within the DPCPS. But some officials declined to offer an explanation, citing the sensitive nature of the problems within the DPCPS. Others cited potential nepotism as an explanation:

*“Probation is falling woefully short of what is required, and it is not for lack of training or resources. The resources are adequate. It is that certain persons are not very interested in what they need to do. Sometimes certain jobs are passed on from one person to another and so it’s not always the most motivated or merit-based person who gets the job.”*

That said, the job of a probation officer is not easy. “You have to be aggressive. You have to actively go after the information you need, and you have to actively follow-up with partner agencies,” reported one individual. Given the demands of their position and their critical importance to diversion and reintegration, probation needs to be a focal point of juvenile justice reforms moving forward. Oversight and hiring practices within the PCPS need to be strengthened, to ensure that all probation officers are fully committed to their work. At the same time, reforms are needed to ensure that the PCPS has adequate resources and training to fulfill its mission.

## DETENTION FACILITIES

The primary detention facility for juveniles in St. Kitts and Nevis is the New Horizons Rehabilitation Centre (NHRC). At the time of our interviews in May 2021, there were twelve juveniles in detention at this facility – seven males and five females (Table 4). In total population, this is on par with the midline population of 13. In a significant improvement since baseline, all of the stakeholders we spoke with reported that no juveniles were being detained at the adult detention facility, Her Majesty’s Prison (HMP); at midline, there were three.

**Table 2: Juveniles in detention in St. Kitts and Nevis**

	BASELINE (2017)		MIDLINE (2019)		ENDLINE (2021)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
New Horizons Rehabilitation Center	6	0	12	1	7	5
Her Majesty's Prison	0	0	3	0	0	0
Total	6	0	15	1	7	5

An important feature of the NHRC is that it hosts both juvenile offenders and juveniles who have not been charged with committing an offense, but are in need of care and protection. This mixing of groups is understandable, given that St. Kitts and Nevis is a small country with limited resources, yet it does introduce the risk that hardened offenders may harm or influence those in need of care and protection. That said, there were no reports of any such incidents from the stakeholders we spoke with.

As noted in the Limitations section of this report, we were unable to access NHRC to observe conditions or interview juveniles in detention, due to the increase in the community spread of COVID-19 in May and June of 2021, and the resulting restrictions on non-essential visitation. The results reported in this section should therefore be interpreted with some caution, as most stakeholders we spoke with were employed by the NHRC or otherwise worked for the government. That said, we also spoke with representatives from legal aid institutions, who represent the interests of the juveniles and have little incentive to misreport; those interviews largely corroborated what we learned from government-affiliated stakeholders.

## COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS AND IMPACTS

The most significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been felt in detention facilities, where visitation from parents, family, and outside observers (including the research team for this report) has been prohibited. The lack of family visitation is regrettable, as it is likely to weaken ties to family and community, making the already difficult challenge of successful reintegration even more so. Closing the facility off to outside observers is also a regrettable rollback of much-needed transparency and oversight of the NHRC facility.

Notwithstanding, to the credit of the NHRC, the facility appears to have done a good job of sustaining quality educational and extracurricular activities. Indeed, as we note below, the quality of these services appears to have improved since our midline study in 2019.

## ACCESS TO MEDICAL, MENTAL HEALTH, AND FAMILY SUPPORT

As was the case at midline, the NHRC does not have full-time medical staff on site. Instead, residents are transported to medical facilities in the community on an as-needed basis. Given the small number of residents at NHRC, this arrangement makes financial sense. However, the research team was unable to verify whether access to medical care in the community is indeed adequate, due to COVID-19 restrictions on non-essential access to NHRC. There is no full-time psychiatrist on-site, but every resident has a caseworker trained in social work and counseling. In addition, residents in need of counseling may be referred to the Counseling Unit within the Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs. In our assessment, access to medical care and mental health care is adequate and has remained at the same levels since baseline and midline.

As was the case at midline and baseline, residents of NHRC lack access to telephones that would enable them to maintain regular contact with their families and social supports. Calling family requires the use of a caseworker's cell phone, which is not a sustainable solution for family contact. And because many families come from disadvantaged backgrounds and do not have the time or finances to travel to the NHRC, many youth go long periods without seeing or contacting their families.

## PROGRAMMING AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

The NHRC provides morning educational classes and afternoon skills sessions on topics including woodworking, electrical skills, farming, and life skills. On weekends, residents do chores and attend to personal care. A church group visits on Sundays to provide religious programming.

At midline, we documented several shortcomings to the quality of these services, most notably that they were irregular and of low quality. Encouragingly, progress appears to have been made since that time. Most stakeholders agreed that programming and education services at NHRC were adequate. As one individual reported:

*“I think that they’re doing an exceptional job at New Horizons. Everyone I’ve interacted with, they seem comfortable, relaxed, and like their needs are being met. They really seem to flourish ...and when I see them with their caseworker [in court], you look at them and they seem to have a good relationship.”*

Echoing this sentiment, another stakeholder reported: “I have no bad report about New Horizons. I would praise New Horizons. I have seen juveniles there who have been reformed while there. I believe in the work at New Horizons.” Further substantiating this point, stakeholders familiar with the daily routines of youth in detention recounted a structured daily routine, complete with educational and extracurricular programming, though we were not able to directly verify this through in-person facility visits due to COVID-19 restrictions.

## PHYSICAL SPACE

Built in 2013, the New Horizons Rehabilitation Centre is a relatively new facility that remains in good condition. The facilities are currently in adequate condition to support a rehabilitative mission. However, at midline, limited overnight staffing meant that juveniles were kept in assessment center cells rather than

in the dormitories in the main building, which is more indicative of punishment than rehabilitation.<sup>6</sup> At baseline and midline, this space was reportedly used for solitary confinement. Due to COVID-19 restrictions on non-essential visitations, the research team was not able to verify whether this was still the situation at endline.

## PHYSICAL SECURITY, PUNISHMENT, AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

One of the main challenges observed by the research team at midline was the use of solitary confinement. As we wrote at the time, “solitary confinement and the use of corporal punishment are common at both HMP and NHRC, directly contradicting reform efforts and the law.” When asked about this at endline, a representative of NHRC denied the use of solitary confinement but acknowledged that they sometimes use “single separation,” which occurs when a juvenile is separated from his peers due to an infraction, altercation, or for preventative purposes. The separated individual will have their own cell for a period of time, usually between three to seven days, and may be removed from communal activities like schools and extracurricular programming. The representative noted that this practice was recommended by an international consultant in 2016, and falls short of conditions associated with solitary confinement, in which an individual is confined to a cell for 22 hours per day without meaningful human contact.

Representatives of the NHRC denied the use of corporal punishment in any form, pointing out that this is a major point of emphasis in their training, and that the guards pride themselves in the effective use of verbal commands. Authorities within the Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs, which oversees the NHRC, also stressed that any such incident would be dealt with sternly, thoroughly investigated, and likely result in the dismissal of the offending officer.

The research team was not able to verify this reported improvement in conditions at the detention facilities due to COVID-19 restrictions, which prevented non-essential access to detention facilities. However, independent sources such as the legal representatives of juveniles reported that they were unaware of any abuses of their clients, and that their clients generally had positive things to say about the facility and displayed good relations with their caseworkers.

## REINTEGRATION

As was the case at baseline and midline, there are no dedicated re-entry programs available to juveniles released from detention. After their release, some juveniles have been able to access vocational programs for youth in general, such as the Advanced Vocational Educational Centre (AVEC) and the Skills Training Empowerment Program (STEP), but they are given no preference for admissions relative to the general population.

The research team also learned that it is not standard practice to assign recently released juveniles to probation after they are released. Furthermore, probation officials do not have contact with the youth during their time at NHRC, which would leave them inadequately prepared to support a reintegration/re-entry plan. It is our assessment that changing this state of affairs and making supervision

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<sup>6</sup> Assessment cells are isolated from the rest of the NHRC facility for use when juveniles need to be isolated from the rest of the population, for behavioral reasons or for their own protection. Assessment cells are also used when detainees first arrive, before they are integrated with the general population.



standard practice would improve the re-entry of recently released juveniles and help reduce recidivism. Moreover, it is feasible with existing resources and institutions.

Another important reform that came up repeatedly during our interviews is the need for transitional housing for youth after they leave detention. Because many youth come from troubled homes, returning them immediately to this environment risks exposing them to the same stressors that led to their original offense. However, transitional housing would be expensive, and could draw resources away from reintegration programming, which is also sorely needed. While the proper balance between programming and transitional housing ultimately falls to policymakers within the Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs, they should be aware of the risks of returning juveniles to the same environment that led them into crime. At the least, they should ensure these individuals are given adequate supervision, counseling, and assistance by a probation officer.

## **SUMMARY**

The government of St. Kitts and Nevis has made some progress towards reforming its juvenile justice system since our midline assessment in 2019. Most notably, the CJC was finally established in late 2019, a full six years after the passage of the Child Justice Act. Although the CJC is still a fledgling institution, it has achieved some progress in the past two years, most notably in the area of promoting diversion for non-violent offenses. Nevertheless, the CJC has yet to fulfill its potential in terms of both ensuring diversion for all those who qualify under the CJA of 2013, as well as in terms of ensuring coordination across agencies to promote the smooth and timely handling of juvenile cases. Coordination across agencies remains poor, resulting in prolonged periods of pre-trial detention for juveniles.

At the New Horizons Rehabilitation Center, conditions have remained satisfactory, and the use of solitary confinement has reportedly been replaced with the more limited use of single separation. Another area of progress is that culturally, there seems to be a genuine commitment to the principles of restorative justice for juveniles, and a keen interest in reforming the juvenile justice system to these ends.

Pre-trial diversion and effective reintegration of recently released juveniles continue to be plagued by a lack of dedicated and accredited programs, despite years of rhetoric paid to the importance of these types of programs. Moreover, probation officers – who have primary responsibility for ensuring adherence to diversion plans and for ensuring successful reintegration – remain poorly motivated and poorly monitored, limiting the quality of supervision and counseling received by juveniles under their supervision.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

We offer six topline recommendations for the Government of St. Kitts and Nevis and its international stakeholders to consider, organized into two categories: recommendations that can be implemented immediately, and recommendations that will require time and additional resources to implement:

Recommendations that can be implemented in the near term:

1. To ensure coordination across agencies, adherence to case management protocols and timely processing of cases, the Child Justice Committee should play a more proactive role in following juvenile cases through the justice system and intervening when appropriate to move matters along and advocate on behalf of the detained juvenile.
2. To ensure adherence to appropriate procedures for juvenile cases, training on juvenile justice matters should be incorporated into basic training for all new police recruits. This training should be reinforced through continuing education programs for all police officers and officials. Alongside these efforts, the police force should develop clear protocols and guidelines for police officers to follow for juvenile cases, and ensure these protocols are widely disseminated and followed

Recommendations that will require time and/or additional resources to implement:

3. To improve rehabilitation, reduce recidivism, and promote restorative justice principles, the Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs should redouble its efforts to establish dedicated pre- and post-trial diversion programs. This will require the Ministry to establish partnerships with local agencies, clubs, and youth organizations to vet and accredit programs to rehabilitate justice-involved juveniles.
4. To ensure probation officers realize their potential when it comes to counseling juvenile probationers and helping them access available services and employment opportunities, the Department of Probation within the Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs should strengthen oversight of probation officers and mid-level managers and hold them accountable for successful case outcomes.
5. To facilitate coordination across agencies and prevent excessive delays in the processing of cases, an electronic case management system accessible to all agencies within the juvenile justice sector should be established. This database should be designed to track cases throughout the juvenile justice process, and to help the relevant agencies manage their cases and workloads effectively.
6. To promote rehabilitation and successful re-entry after detention, the courts and the Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs should:
  - a. Make it standard practice to assign juveniles to probation after they are released from detention. Under the supervision of a probation officer, recently released juveniles can and should receive counseling, mentoring, and other forms of reintegration assistance.
  - b. Consider investing in transitional housing so that youth are not immediately reduced to adverse home environments and the same stressors that led to their detention.

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